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ABSTRACT

This report examines the experiences of homeless young parents with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which can be an important tool in helping them achieve long-term stability and economic self-sufficiency. The 1996 welfare reform act included special provisions that applied only to minor teen parents, requiring them to be in school and residing at home or in approved living situations in order to receive benefits. Data from surveys of over 100 homeless young parents and 20 service providers nationwide indicated that most homeless parenting youth would likely meet the basic eligibility requirements to receive TANF benefits. However, many did not even know they might be eligible. Even when homeless youth knew about TANF, they had trouble accessing or keeping benefits. Results suggest that the living arrangement rule may be operating as a barrier to TANF services rather than as an opportunity to help provide young parents with the resources to find safe housing. Recommendations include improving TANF program rules for young parents by allowing for a transitional compliance period in which to come into compliance with the TANF minor parent rules, and increasing community outreach efforts and availability of support services for young parents. (SM)

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Families on the Edge:

Homeless Young Parents and Their Welfare Experiences

A Survey of Homeless Youth and Service Providers

Bob Reeg
Christine Grisham
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Further, we are appreciative of the 25 youth-serving organizations that facilitated the distribution and collection of surveys from homeless young parents participating in their programs. Their willingness to identify and recruit youth respondents demonstrates these organizations' recognition of the importance of youth involvement in public policy development, implementation, and monitoring. We also thank the 20 youth-serving organizations that completed a survey eliciting provider viewpoints about TANF program operations.

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Executive Summary

Homeless young parents live life on the edge. Many have escaped abusive and neglectful home situations. They and their children are often in unsafe situations with poor access to basic resources like adequate food, clothing, and health care. Some struggle with substance abuse and mental health problems. As some of the most vulnerable members of society, homeless young parents need access to public services, including welfare.

In 1996, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, a system of cash grants for eligible low-income families, was replaced by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which places a 60-month lifetime limit on federal assistance to families and emphasizes work over education as the means toward family self-sufficiency. As a block grant program, TANF gives states significant responsibility—and flexibility—to design and implement their own welfare programs.

This report focuses on the experiences of homeless young parents with the TANF program. For young parents, TANF can be an important tool—a "leg up"—in helping these families achieve long-term stability and economic self-sufficiency. Most low-income young parents struggle to secure child care and transportation, to continue their education, and to find reliable jobs that pay livable wages. Homeless young parents face the additional challenge of locating permanent and safe housing.

The 1996 welfare bill included special provisions that applied only to minor teen parents, requiring them to be in school and residing at home or in approved living situations in order to receive benefits. While the goals behind these provisions—to help teen parents improve their educational attainment and keep them living in supervised settings when appropriate—were sound, they can make accessing welfare and other benefits more difficult for young parents. To find out what is happening with homeless parenting youth and TANF, the National Network for Youth (National Network) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) collected surveys from more than 100 homeless youth and 20 service providers. Here are the main findings:

- **Most homeless parenting youth would likely meet the basic eligibility requirements to receive TANF benefits.** In fact, 84 percent of homeless parenting youth surveyed who applied were eligible.
- **However, many homeless youth did not even know they might be eligible to receive welfare assistance.** Fully one-half of homeless youth surveyed who had never applied for TANF did not even know about the program. And, less than 40 percent of survey respondents reported receiving TANF assistance at the time of the survey.

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- **Even when homeless youth know about TANF, they have trouble accessing or keeping benefits.** Fourteen of the 20 service providers surveyed said that the homeless parenting youth they served had problems accessing TANF. Further, 36 percent of homeless parenting youth who had received TANF reported having been sanctioned or terminated from the program, although most thought they were complying with program rules.

- **The living arrangement rule may, in fact, be operating as a barrier to TANF services rather than as an opportunity to help provide homeless young parents with the resources to find safe housing.** Thirty-one percent of TANF-receiving respondents who had been subject to the living arrangement rule reported that it actually put them in an unsafe situation.

The results of these surveys of homeless young parents and the service providers working with them reveal that homeless young families are often experiencing difficulty both in accessing the TANF program and in meeting its ongoing eligibility and participation requirements. At the end of this report, CLASP and the National Network offer policy and practice recommendations for the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, state TANF agencies and local TANF offices, youth-serving organizations, and young parents. Some of the main recommendations include:

- Improve the TANF program rules for young parents by allowing for a "transitional compliance period" where minor parents are given time to come into compliance with the TANF minor parent rules; permitting the time limit for assistance to commence at age 20 for young parents who are complying with the education/training rule; instituting more specific policies on sanctions protections; and ending the limit on vocational education as an allowable activity for state work participation rates.

- Strengthen the TANF minor parent living arrangement rule by ensuring states provide adequate alternative living arrangements, expand the definition of organizations that can act as alternative living arrangements, and consult with young parents regarding their housing preferences.

- Increase community outreach efforts and the availability of supportive services for young parents and their families.

- Collect comprehensive data on young parents (both recipients and non-recipients of TANF) and the effects the TANF minor parent rules have on families.

- Ensure staff members at state and local TANF offices are trained in program provisions affecting young parents, by increasing the availability of technical assistance for TANF workers about program rules, as well as about the research on outcomes for young parents and their families.

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Introduction

Homeless young parents live life on the edge. Many have escaped abusive and neglectful home situations. They and their children are often in unsafe situations with poor access to basic resources like adequate food, clothing, and health care. Some struggle with substance abuse and mental health problems. As some of the most vulnerable members of society, homeless young parents need access to public services, including welfare.

Passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996 transformed welfare policy in the United States. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, a system of cash grants for eligible low-income families, was replaced by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which places a 60-month lifetime limit on federal assistance to families and emphasizes work over education as the means toward family self-sufficiency. As a block grant program, TANF gives states significant responsibility—and flexibility—to design and implement their own welfare programs.

This report focuses on the experiences of homeless young parents with the TANF program. For young parents, TANF can be an important tool—a "leg up"—in helping these families achieve long-term stability and economic self-sufficiency. Most low-income young parents struggle to secure child care and transportation, to continue their education, and to find reliable jobs that pay livable wages. Homeless young parents face the additional challenge of locating permanent and safe housing.

Young parents may receive their own TANF assistance grants if they meet certain eligibility criteria. Like their older counterparts, young parents seeking TANF assistance must agree to adhere to certain rules, such as cooperating in the collection of child support from the non-custodial parents. In addition, the TANF statute has two rules that apply only to *minor* teen parents (typically, those under 18 years of age).[1] It mandates that states deny federal assistance to minor parents unless they adhere to rules related to their living arrangements and to participation in education/training. The minor parent living arrangement rule prohibits states from providing federal TANF assistance to unmarried, custodial, minor parents unless they live with a parent, legal guardian, or another adult relative, or in an alternative living arrangement approved by the state. The minor parent education/training rule prohibits states from using federal TANF funds to assist unmarried, custodial, minor parents caring for a child 12 weeks of age or older unless the parent has completed high school (or its equivalent) or is participating in an appropriate educational activity (i.e., standard school or an approved alternative, including a training program).[2] (See Appendix B for the text of the TANF statute's minor parent provisions.)

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One reading of the minor parent provisions views them as well-intentioned efforts to address the special educational and housing needs of young parents. Other interpretations understand them to be either clumsy tools to establish disincentives to childbearing among young people, or worse, as means to keep young families out of the TANF program. In any event, emerging research suggests that too many minor parents are being denied TANF support because states are not exercising their flexibility appropriately or because the minor parent provisions are misunderstood by TANF eligibility workers, suggesting that a second look is needed by governmental agencies and youth advocates at how the TANF program rules are impacting young families.[3]

Between 1.3 million and 2.8 million youth live on the streets of the United States each year.[4] Research with the homeless youth population reveals that typically they are fleeing or are currently finding themselves in situations that endanger their physical and/or mental health. In most cases, their homelessness is a means of escaping numerous problems that exist in the home environment. Severe family conflict, physical and sexual abuse, and parental alcohol and other drug abuse remain the key causal factors for homelessness among youth.[5] Young parents who are homeless frequently report being thrown out of their homes by family members who disapprove of the youth's parenting status or who are unable to cope emotionally or practically with the presence of a child (or an additional child) in the home. While it is impossible to state definitively how many homeless youth are parents, one study reported that 5 percent of runaway and homeless youth had children.[6]

In this report, the National Network for Youth (National Network) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) examine the experiences of homeless young parents—both minor parents and older young parents (typically, ages 18 through 21)—with the TANF program. While young parents have been a focus of the TANF program, the effect of the program's rules on *homeless* young parents has not been examined. Young parents who are homeless face complex life circumstances, such as limited family and community support and lack of access to income, that TANF is intended to address. A public assistance program that fails to serve them can hardly be hailed a success.

With these issues in mind, the National Network and CLASP surveyed homeless young parents in order to learn about their knowledge of TANF and their experiences in applying for and receiving TANF assistance. We also surveyed organizations providing residential services to homeless youth to capture their observations about the effectiveness of their states' TANF programs in reaching and serving homeless young parents (see Appendix A: Project Design).

The National Network and CLASP believe that the survey responses offer important insights into whether and how TANF is helping homeless young families. However, this study has a number of limitations. First, while young parents and the organizations that serve them have been asked to comment on the TANF program, we did not survey

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state or local welfare agencies. Second, it is important to note that the survey of homeless parenting youth was not conducted using random sampling, nor was the sample size very large. As a result, the findings of this survey cannot be considered statistically representative of homeless young parents. Nevertheless, this survey breaks new ground because homeless young parents—and the organizations that serve them—have scarcely been asked to participate in *any* survey. That over 100 such parents voluntarily participated in a survey at a chaotic time in their lives merits commendation. What these young people have to say about how the TANF program does or does not address their needs and aspirations should be instructive to decision-makers.

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Findings from the Survey of Homeless Young Parents

This project sought information from homeless young parents about their knowledge of the TANF program and about their experiences in applying for and receiving assistance. The youth survey requested all respondents to provide basic demographic information, such as age, sex, state of residence, marital status, number and ages of children, and age at first child's birth. All respondents were then asked to share their opinions on the implementation of TANF, particularly the minor parent provisions. Then, respondents completed different sets of questions about their experiences with the TANF program, depending on whether they had (1) *never* applied for or received a welfare cash grant; (2) applied for but *did not* receive a welfare cash grant; or (3) applied for *and* received a welfare cash grant.

Respondent Characteristics

Almost two-thirds of homeless young parents surveyed were not currently receiving TANF assistance, a surprising finding given that this group of young families is likely to be eligible for such aid under even the strictest public assistance program requirements. Due both to their age, their housing situation, and their family detachment, homeless young parents are unlikely to be equipped to obtain economic self-sufficiency without public assistance, even if they are working. Further, the children of these young parents are very young, suggesting that the stability and well-being of the family is especially precarious. The specific demographic characteristics of the survey respondents included:[7]

- **Age**—The average age of the survey respondents was 18; two-thirds were between 18 and 21 years of age.
- **Gender**—Ninety-four percent were mothers, while 6 percent were fathers.
- **Relationship Status**—Eighty-eight percent reported they were single, 7 percent reported they were married, 5 percent reported "other" (explained by the respondent as either non-marital relationship or separated), and 1 percent reported they were divorced.
- **Ward of State**—Seven percent reported that they were currently a foster child/ward of the state.
- **Number of Children**—Eighty-one percent had one child, 18 percent had two children, and 1 percent had more than two children.

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- **Ages of Children**—Forty-seven percent of respondents' children were one year of age or younger; 24 percent of respondents' children were between one and two years of age, and 28 percent of respondents' children were older than two years of age. Although the homeless youth surveyed were not asked this question, 10 respondents voluntarily reported that they were pregnant at the time of the survey.
- **Age Upon Parenthood**—The average age of respondents when they first became a parent was 17 years, with 35 percent being 18 years of age or older and 11 percent being 14 years of age or younger.
- **Custodial Status**—Eleven percent reported they did not have (at least) one child currently living with them.
- **TANF Family History**—Thirty-four percent reported that their own parent received a welfare cash grant (either currently or in the past), 40 percent reported that their own parent had never received a welfare cash grant (either currently or in the past), and 26 percent did not know.
- **TANF Status**—Only 38 percent reported that they were *currently* receiving a welfare cash grant.

Opinions About TANF Rules and TANF Program Implementation

The survey asked homeless young parents their opinions of the minor parent living arrangement rule, the minor parent education/training rule, and implementation of the TANF program generally. All respondents were asked to comment on the merits of the minor parent provisions, regardless of whether the rules ever applied to them or not. For instance, older homeless young parents could have critical insights into the minor parent rules given that they were perhaps subject to them at some time in the past themselves, and they certainly were close enough in age and life circumstance to their minor parent peers to be able to reflect upon the potential impact of these provisions on young families.

Minor Parent Living Arrangement Rule: A majority of homeless young parents surveyed expressed objections to the minor parent living arrangement rule, which is not surprising given the unsafe circumstances that typically precipitate homelessness among youth. Within this context, it makes perfect sense that a majority of homeless young parents concluded that the state should not be able to dictate where young parents must live (especially not in their family's homes, from which many of them have fled or been kicked out) as a condition of eligibility for TANF assistance. At the same time, many homeless young parents clearly recognize that a stable living arrangement is preferable to homelessness, as evidenced by those respondents who supported the minor parent living arrangement rule.

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Sixty percent of respondents felt that the government should not tell minor parents where they have to live in order to receive TANF assistance. Twenty-eight percent felt that the government should tell minor parents where they have to live, and 11 percent were unsure. Respondents opposed to the rule expressed safety concerns for young families and a desire to move young parents toward independence. Proponents of the minor parent living arrangement rule believed that it could provide minor parents a source of stability (see "Homeless Young Parents Speak Out...on the Living Arrangement Rule").

Homeless Young Parents Speak Out... on the Living Arrangement Rule[3]

"Do you think that the government should tell parents less than 18 years old that they have to live with a parent, guardian, or another relative or at some other place that the welfare office allows in order to receive a welfare cash grant?"

NO, because...

- Some kids are kicked out for being pregnant and don't have a choice in their housing.
- I have been forced to live with a parent where I am under stress and don't feel safe.
- The options may not be good or safe options, particularly for homeless single parents under the age of 18.
- Sometimes the places they approve shouldn't be approved.
- It is not teaching you to be independent.
- It is harder when living with someone. At least when you are on your own you learn responsibility and how the real world works.
- It shouldn't matter as long as the baby is safe.

YES, because...

- It's the right thing to do and it's hard enough being under 18 years old with a child.
- I think they need to be living in a stable environment for the children to be receiving money from the government.
- It is probably safer.
- I think a lot of teens still need guidance.
- The parent or guardian could help them maintain and manage money.
- There would be someone responsible over the money.

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Minor Parent Education/Training Rule: Sixty-nine percent of respondents felt that the government should require minor teen parents receiving TANF to attend school or training. Twenty-one percent of respondents felt that the government should *not* require this. Nine percent of respondents were unsure. Proponents of this rule cited the connection between educational completion and future economic self-sufficiency. The need or desire to work was mentioned by some of the respondents who were opposed to the rule (see "Homeless Young Parents Speak Out ...on the Education/Training Requirement").

By expressing support for the minor parent education/training rule, a majority of the homeless young parents surveyed appear to be making the connection between educational achievement and future economic self-sufficiency and to understand their responsibility to their children in making a good faith effort at working toward financial independence.

Respondents who opposed the rule, however, were concerned about being able to satisfy the education/training requirement while also ensuring care for their children. In addition, some homeless young parents expressed a preference for work instead of school or training. These concerns about the balance between work and support services, particularly the availability of child care, mirror the considerations of adult TANF beneficiaries.

Homeless Young Parents Speak Out... on the Education/Training Requirement

"Do you think that the government should tell parents less than 18 years old that they have to attend school or training in order to receive a welfare cash grant?"

YES, because...

- It motivates people to do better. You have to work in this world to get what you need.
- But I need child care if I work and go to school.
- Education is everything. If the parent doesn't finish school or have some education he/she couldn't take care of the child efficiently.

No, because...

- Someone might have a job instead of school or training.
- What if their child is too young or they can't get a babysitter to go to school?
- I should be able to work part-time and stay home with my child.

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TANF Program Implementation: In addition to asking homeless young parents questions that dealt specifically with the minor parent rules, the survey sought comments on the general implementation of the TANF program. Respondents offered a number of useful suggestions for making the TANF program more accessible, flexible, and "customer-friendly" for young parents.

Some recommendations related to improving access to, and compliance with, the TANF program for *all* recipients (e.g., paperwork simplification). Other recommendations focused particularly on young parents (e.g., scheduling orientations and appointments during non-school hours).

Respondent recommendations spanned the continuum of program operations, including outreach, eligibility determination, program compliance, and supportive services, suggesting that opportunities are available to strengthen all aspects of program administration and operations. A number of practical recommendations could be readily implemented by state and local TANF agencies and offices. In fact, some state agencies and local offices may have already adopted such practices. Accordingly, these recommendations should not be interpreted to suggest that no state or locality has implemented them, but rather that states and localities that have not implemented such practices may do so (see "Homeless Young Parents Speak Out...on Improving the TANF Program" on page 12).

What Are the Experiences of Those Who Have Never Applied for TANF?

Forty-four percent of respondents reported that they have never applied for TANF assistance. When asked for the "top reason" why they had not applied, nearly half (49 percent) said they did not know that welfare cash grants existed. Another 17 percent did not believe they were eligible, 9 percent did not think it was worth it to apply, 6 percent said they did not know how to apply, and 6 percent said they already had enough money.

That two-thirds of the homeless young parents who had never applied for TANF were either unaware of the program altogether or believed that they were not eligible speaks to a tremendous need for state TANF agencies, local TANF offices, homeless youth service providers, and other organizations to reach out to this group of young parents.

The survey also sought to gauge whether the minor parent living arrangement and education/training rules had discouraged minors from applying for TANF benefits. Only one respondent who had been a minor when she decided not to apply reported that the minor parent living arrangement rule affected her decision. Similarly, only one respondent reported that the minor parent education/training rule affected her decision

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Homeless Young Parents Speak Out... on Improving the TANF Program

"What would you suggest be done to make it easier for young parents to obtain and use welfare cash grants?"

Outreach and Case Management

- Make the programs more known to young women.
- They should come to the hospital and give you an application.
- Caseworkers can do home intakes and visits.
- Welfare offices closer to home.
- Shouldn't have to attend so many orientations and appointments during school hours.

Eligibility and Benefit Levels

- Making resources more available and easier to get no matter the current situation of the parent.
- That if you want to get your own place the grant would stay the same. Just give us a protective payee.
- Don't include parent income while on welfare unless fraud is suspected. Just because a young mother lives with someone does not mean the income is going to them.
- It would be easier if the welfare agency was more cooperative. I went to school and didn't get services because I was too young.

Program Rules

- I suggest that people younger than 18 should be able to receive cash grants, because when you are young it's harder to find a job or have someone hire you. And if you're working it's difficult to go to school at the same time and have time to spend with your child.
- Let them attend college and not have to work at the same time. Doing both essentially alone is overwhelming and sometimes makes you want to give it all up.
- I think that people should be able to get a four-year degree in college, because when people are allowed to get their four-year degrees, they are most likely to get off welfare for good and have a good paying job to support their children.

Supportive Services

- Educate us how to budget and handle money.
- Affordable housing, child care support. I could finish school/go to technical training and get paid more money to move into my own apartment.

Customer Service

- I got the grant but they ask for so much and workers are rude and make you feel so little. I only [applied for TANF assistance] because I want to give my baby something better than what I got from my mother.
- Welfare staff that are more friendly, helpful, and fair.
- Less paperwork, more technology. Keep records so we don't have to re-fill out paper.
- They stated that I missed an appointment even though I never received an appointment letter.
- The lady who did my interview said I didn't bring the right paperwork in when I did.

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not to apply. This suggests that the minor parent rules in and of themselves do not appear to be a barrier preventing homeless minor parents from applying for TANF. However, since nearly half of the homeless young parents who had never applied for TANF were not even aware of the program, they would likely not be aware of the minor parent rules. Accordingly, these findings do not provide sufficient information either to assert or deny that the minor parent rules interfere with homeless minor parents' ability to access the TANF program.

What Are the Experiences of Those Who Have Applied for TANF?

Fifty-four percent of respondents reported trying to apply for TANF assistance at least one time. Among the reasons they offered for applying:[9]

- 53 percent applied because their living situation had changed.
- 49 percent applied because they learned that they or their child might be eligible.
- 21 percent applied because they stopped receiving money from the other parent of their child or his/her family. Additionally, 21 percent applied because they stopped receiving money from their own family members or friends.
- 7 percent applied because they or their child had serious health needs.
- 2 percent applied because their own parent (the grandparent) stopped receiving a welfare cash grant.

The vast majority of homeless young parents (84 percent) who applied for TANF were told they were eligible. However, of the 16 percent of respondents (9 individuals) who were told they were not eligible, six of nine were not even given an application.

The high percentage of homeless young parents who reported being determined eligible for TANF assistance upon application confirms the hypothesis that this group of families is likely to meet program requirements if given the opportunity. This finding only bolsters the argument that more can be done to make homeless young parents aware of the program and to provide them assistance in applying. In addition, an important opportunity is being missed and the intent of the legislation may be thwarted when six of the nine individuals who did not receive TANF when they tried to apply were never even given an application.[10] Homeless young parents need an improved intake process, where staff members are given sufficient training about the eligibility rules pertaining to minor parents, and where all such parents are allowed to receive an application and meet with a caseworker.

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Not surprisingly, a change in living situation (presumably from housed to homeless) was the primary factor in these young parents' decisions to seek TANF assistance. For homeless young people, a change in living situation likely means a loss of family economic and social support. Indeed, a significant percentage of respondents cited the loss of income support from the parent of their child or that parent's family, or from their own network of family and friends, as the causal factor precipitating their application for TANF assistance. For these homeless young parents, then, it appears that the TANF program acts as an essential safety net when their living arrangements and income supports have collapsed.

What Are the Experiences of Those Who Applied But Never Received TANF Assistance?[11]

The survey asked the nine homeless young parents who had applied for TANF but never received assistance if they ever had trouble finding a safe place to live as a result. Three respondents replied in the affirmative. One noted that she had to return home (which presumably was not safe, or she would have likely chosen to remain there), and another stated that she had to move among three and four different houses.

This survey also asked those respondents who were minors at the time of their application for TANF assistance and who had never received assistance about what information they received from the local TANF office regarding the minor parent living arrangement and education and training rules. Six reported that a worker told them that they would not be able to receive TANF assistance because of where they were living. Four individuals reported that a worker did not tell them this information. Those who reported receiving instructions from a welfare worker about the living arrangement rule were told either that a minor parent had to live "with [his or her] parents" (2 individuals), "with a relative or guardian" (2), or "in another place the welfare office approved" (4).[12]

Three individuals reported that a welfare worker told them that minor parents could not receive TANF assistance unless they participated in education or training. Five individuals reported that a worker did not tell them this information.

Although the sample of homeless young parents who applied but did not receive assistance is small, their responses are nevertheless illuminating. Most of the respondents who applied for but never received TANF attributed that failure in part to their inability to find a safe place to live. This suggests that the TANF program can play a critical role in assisting homeless families in safe and stable housing. Further, some respondents who were minor parents at the time they applied reported that caseworkers did not inform them about the minor parent rules, which paints a mixed picture as to whether local TANF offices are properly informing such parents about the rules.

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What Are the Experiences of Those Who Have Received TANF Assistance?

Homeless young parents who are TANF beneficiaries validate what is known about the use of TANF cash grants by all beneficiary groups—that the resources are used to meet families' basic needs or to enable parents to secure the skills and supports necessary for their families' economic self-sufficiency (see "Homeless Young Parents Speak Out...on How Cash Assistance Helps").

Homeless Young Parents Speak Out... on How Cash Assistance Helps

"How does (did) having a welfare cash grant benefit you and your child?"

- I was able to feed us better and get him things he needed like diapers, wipes, clothes, etc.
- It gives me a way to get my child's needs [met] while I go to school and during my postpartum period.
- It bettered my living area and provided clothes for my child.
- I did not have any other income so this has helped a lot for me to get on my feet.
- It keeps utilities on.
- I am able to attend school.
- I was able to get on my feet and get ready to get a part-time job.

However, nearly one-third of these respondents (31 percent) reported that compliance with the minor parent living arrangement rule required them to live in an arrangement in which they did not feel safe. Several respondents described being placed in living arrangements where violence and drug use were taking place (see "Homeless Young Parents Speak Out...on the Effect of Minor Living Arrangement Rule" on page 16).

Much like the rest of the TANF caseload, some homeless young parents report being sanctioned or terminated from the program. Sixty-four percent of respondents reported that they had *not* been sanctioned or terminated from the program, while 36 percent reported that they had been sanctioned or terminated. In addition, thirteen individuals reported having their welfare cash grant reduced or cut off, even though they thought they were complying with program rules. These young parents may not fully comprehend program rules and may not appreciate why they became ineligible or noncompliant. When asked why their cash grant was reduced or why they were cut off from the program, seven individuals indicated that they found employment. Four individuals reported they failed to participate in required work activities; three individuals reported missing appointments with their caseworker; and two individuals reported having left or lost their approved living situation.

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Homeless Young Parents Speak Out... on the Effect of Minor Living Arrangement Rule

"While receiving your welfare cash grant, did/has the 'approved living situation' rule ever put you in a position of living someplace where you and your child did not feel safe?"

YES...

- Domestic violence.
- I moved back with my real parents, but they were still using drugs and selling them.
- My parents don't live in a safe neighborhood, and there were seven other people living in a one-bedroom apartment.
- The [emergency shelter] was full of dope addicts.
- Parents put me out; I was homeless.

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Findings from the Survey of Service Providers

This project also sought information from organizations providing residential services[13] to homeless youth to capture their observations about the effectiveness of their states' TANF programs in reaching and serving homeless young parents. The service provider survey requested youth-serving organizations to describe their level of involvement in assisting homeless young parents in applying for TANF assistance, to identify whether youth they serve are having difficulties obtaining TANF assistance, and to offer recommendations for improving the TANF program so that young parents could more easily obtain and use the grants.

Organizational Characteristics

Twenty organizations located in 12 states providing residential services to homeless youth completed the service provider survey.[14] In order to set youth-serving organizations' experiences with the TANF program in the larger context of their work with young people, the service provider survey asked whether the organization served parenting or pregnant/parenting youth only or both pregnant/parenting and non-parenting youth. Organizations were about evenly split between the two.[15]

Application Assistance and Training

This project sought to learn about the level of service that youth-serving organizations are providing to assist young parents in applying for TANF, as well as the level of training they have provided to organization staff and to their program participants about the TANF program.

Many organizations reported the ability to provide training and/or specialized staff to help homeless young parents in applying for TANF assistance. Sixteen organizations reported having assisted young parents in applying for TANF assistance. Eight organizations reported having a staff member specially designated to assist young parents with their TANF applications. Five organizations reported providing some level of staff training about the TANF program.[16] This capacity seems to reflect a commitment by these homeless youth-serving organizations to assist their young people in accessing programs and services for which they may be eligible.

Ten organizations reported providing some level of training for young parents about the TANF program. Organizations reported that they typically made arrangements for

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their participants to receive this training at local TANF offices. A few organizations reported that they arrange for such training to take place at the residential facilities in which their participants are living.

A majority of the youth-serving organizations that serve homeless young parents appear to be providing adequate staff training on TANF. However, an important opportunity still exists to strengthen partnerships between youth-serving organizations and state TANF agencies and local TANF offices.

Participant Tracking and Grant Usage

A large number of the organizations reported that they monitor the status of their residents' eligibility for and participation in the TANF program. Fourteen organizations reported that they track whether their residents are eligible for, have applied for, or are receiving TANF assistance. Six organizations said they track whether homeless young parents receive grants and/or the amount of the grants. Five organizations said they track the parents' eligibility for TANF. Two organizations said they track compliance with TANF program rules.

One-half of the organizations responding to this survey also help young parents save a portion of their TANF grants for use after exiting the residential program. These findings reflect a willingness among homeless youth-serving organizations to work with their young people in enrolling for publicly-funded supports for which they are eligible, in meeting requirements of such programs, and in obtaining long-term economic self-sufficiency.

Provider Opinions About the TANF Program

This project sought to discern whether organizations providing residential services to homeless youth were aware of difficulties that homeless young parents may be experiencing in obtaining TANF assistance. Service providers have an instructive front-line view of the accessibility of the TANF program to homeless young families. Fourteen of the 20 organizations surveyed asserted that some of their participants who appear to be eligible for TANF assistance have had difficulty obtaining it (either currently or in the past). One respondent elaborated on this sentiment:

> "Due to the transient nature of the youth we serve, the youth have difficulty obtaining their mail, so appointments and instructions are often missed or never received. Other issues are: long waits to see a worker, youth are unable (due to education level) to understand instructions, and often feel the workers are not helpful in the application process. The youth often have difficulty in getting sanctions lifted and cases transferred from county to county [when they move]. Some youth feel they are misinformed and are sent from office to office."

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Service Providers Speak Out... on Improving the TANF Program

Outreach and Case Management

- More education [about the TANF program] for young parents and organizations that serve young parents.
- More community trainings in order for staff of programs to acquire more knowledge about the TANF program.
- It would be helpful to obtain information on the specifics of the cash grants and for all staff to be able to pass the information along.
- Have teen parent caseworkers in the welfare office. This prevents bias against teen mothers and accurate information to all.
- One designated person at the local welfare office for young parents to work with.
- Need to do more community outreach; we have to go to them.
- More available case managers; quicker appointments and orientations.
- More understandable/manageable system for youth.
- A user-friendly orientation/seminar offered throughout the year for youth and caseworkers to access on a regular basis, which should include: what to expect when applying, all necessary information to be provided to access services, and who to speak to if problems arise. Also, updates on changes in benefits provided to recipients should be written in laymen's terms.

Eligibility and Benefit Levels

- Clear guidelines for receipt.
- Provide assistance to the applicant in obtaining certain documents.
- Flexibility with paternity information.

Program Rules

- Allow time clock to not tick while doing general equivalency diploma (GED).
- College students should not have to work.
- Caseworkers are pressuring teens to get GEDs instead of high school diplomas before the age of 18 years, and then expecting them to comply with the rules of 'work first.'
- Take into consideration the developmental growth of teenagers and not expect them to parent, work, and go to school.

Supportive Services

- More funding made available, especially in the child care assistance area.

Customer Service

- Make the process streamlined and user-friendly.
- More consistency between the local welfare offices in each county.
- More positive attitude of TANF eligibility workers towards teen/young parents.

Organizations were also requested to offer recommendations on how accessing TANF could be easier for young parents (see "Service Providers Speak Out...on Improving the TANF Program" above). Organizations offered a range of suggestions for strength-

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ening the TANF program as it relates to young parents. The recommendations speak generally to the need for accommodations to be made for young people within the TANF program.

Many of these practical recommendations could be readily implemented by state TANF agencies and local TANF offices. In fact, some state agencies and local offices may have already adopted such practices. Accordingly, these recommendations should not be interpreted to suggest that no state or locality has implemented the practice, but rather that states that have not implemented such practices should do so.

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Policy and Practice Recommendations

The results of these surveys of homeless young parents and the service providers working with them reveal that homeless young families, who have great need for the income and social supports that the TANF program offers, are often experiencing difficulty both in accessing the program and in meeting its ongoing eligibility and participation requirements. State TANF agencies and local TANF offices, which shoulder tremendous responsibility—and enjoy considerable flexibility—for administering the TANF program, could readily adopt numerous changes that would improve young parents' ability to access the program and comply with its requirements. Other barriers would best be addressed through changes to the federal TANF statute or through administrative changes at the federal level. Certainly, public, community-based, and faith-based organizations serving youth could incorporate various practices into their service delivery that would be of help to young parents. Finally, young parents themselves, who are ultimately responsible for the well-being of their children and their family's economic self-sufficiency, must advocate for themselves and for their peers. While the following recommendations were written with *homeless* young parents in mind, they would likely benefit all young parents. The five main recommendations are:

- Improve the TANF program rules for young parents by allowing for a "transitional compliance period" where minor parents are given time to come into compliance with the TANF minor parent rules; permitting the time limit for assistance to commence at age 20 for young parents who are complying with the education/training rule; instituting more specific policies on sanctions protections; and ending the limit on vocational education as an allowable activity for state work participation rates.
- Strengthen the TANF minor parent living arrangement rule by ensuring states provide adequate alternative living arrangements, expand the definition of organizations that can act as alternative living arrangements, and consult with young parents regarding their housing preferences.
- Increase community outreach efforts and the availability of supportive services for young parents and their families.
- Collect comprehensive data on young parents (both recipients and non-recipients of TANF) and the effects the TANF minor parent rules have on families.

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- Ensure staff members at state and local TANF offices are trained in program provisions affecting young parents, by increasing the availability of technical assistance for TANF workers about program rules, as well as about the research on outcomes for young parents and their families.

In addition, the National Network and CLASP offer the following detailed policy and practice recommendations for the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, state TANF agencies and local TANF offices, youth-serving organizations, and young parents.

Recommendations for the U.S. Congress

Eligibility and Benefit Levels

- Permit states to establish a transitional compliance period whereby income-eligible minor parents who do not meet the education/training or living arrangement conditions of eligibility for TANF at the time of application (such as school dropouts and homeless youth) are nevertheless allowed to receive assistance on the condition that they comply with the minor parent rules within an established period.
- Ensure that states consult with minor parents about their preferred living arrangements.
- Ensure the provision of alternative living arrangements for minor parents unable to live at home.
- Identify transitional living projects for older homeless youth funded through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) as a type of living arrangement that states may deem to be suitable for adhering to the minor parent living arrangement rule.

Program Rules

- Commence the lifetime limit on TANF assistance for young parents completing their education and training programs when they turn 20, rather than when they turn 19, in order to allow these older youth to complete their basic education/training without the lifetime limit clock ticking.
- Establish sanctions protection procedures that help young parents understand, avoid, and/or end sanctions.
- End restrictions on states' ability to count vocational training as a strategy for helping parents attain access to better jobs.[17]

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Supportive Services

- Increase appropriations for federal programs available to provide alternative living arrangements for young parents unable to live at home.
- Increase funding for federal programs that provide child care and other supportive services to young parents to enable them to attend school or training or comply with work requirements.

Other Recommendations

- Require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study of young parents receiving TANF assistance, in order to identify state and community best practices related to young parent enrollment and tracking and to measure indicators of family well-being.
- Require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study of young parents not receiving TANF assistance to identify reasons for non-participation and to measure indicators of family well-being.
- Require that state plans identify the extent of unmet service needs of TANF young parents.
- Require that state plans report on the extent of the need for supervised living arrangements for minor parents.

Recommendations for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Outreach and Case Management

- Provide technical assistance and serve as a clearinghouse of research and best practices on strategies for outreach and enrollment assistance to young parents.

Eligibility and Benefit Levels

- Provide technical assistance and serve as a clearinghouse of research and best practices on strategies for meeting and assessing the minor parent education and training rule and the appropriateness of various living arrangements.

Program Rules

- Provide technical assistance and serve as a clearinghouse of research and best practices on exemptions from program rules.

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- Provide technical assistance and serve as a clearinghouse of research and best practices on how best to help young parents participating in TANF choose between education and skills training programs, direct work experience, and other eligible activities for satisfying program requirements—taking into account the participants' immediate needs and future goals.

Recommendations for State TANF Agencies and Local TANF Offices

Outreach and Case Management

- Develop and implement strategies to ensure young parents' awareness of the TANF program generally and of eligibility criteria and program rules specifically. Special outreach and enrollment materials and strategies should be designed for and targeted to young parents specifically, and materials intended for the general TANF population should include information for young parents.
- Establish partnerships with community-based public, private, and non-profit organizations serving youth to enlist them in TANF outreach and enrollment efforts.
- Include Runaway and Homeless Youth Act grantees, second chance homes, and maternity group homes as outreach and enrollment sites.
- Develop and train eligibility and compliance specialists for young parents.
- Outstation TANF eligibility workers in locations and settings where low-income young parents congregate.

Eligibility and Benefit Levels

- Use state funds to support needy young parents who are out of compliance with program rules because they are unable to meet the requirements.
- Establish a participation definition that allows minor parents sufficient time to come into compliance with the rules.
- Exercise state option to establish a transitional compliance period for minor parents.
- Expedite income eligibility determinations for homeless young parents and examine state income deeming rules, where applicable, to reflect that homeless young parents may not have access to their parents' income.

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- Consult with minor parents about their preferred living arrangement prior to making a determination of approved living arrangement.
- Provide alternative living arrangements for young parents unable to live at home.
- Designate transitional living projects for homeless youth as a type of living arrangement suitable for adhering to the minor parent living arrangement rule.
- Permit TANF staff to provide eligibility determination, enrollment assistance, and case management services in residential and non-residential settings where young parents congregate, such as transitional living programs, second chance homes, and maternity group homes.

Program Rules

- Assist young parents participating in TANF in choosing between education and training programs, direct work experience, and other eligible activities as means for satisfying program requirements, taking into account the young parents' perspectives on their immediate economic needs and long-term self-sufficiency goals.
- Train staff on policies relating to young parents, including those designed to address good cause exemptions and those designed to avoid inappropriate diversion from applying for TANF assistance.
- Identify third-party contacts for homeless young parents to ensure that notices and instructions delivered by mail or telephone may reach them.

Customer Service

- Schedule orientations and trainings for young parents at times that do not conflict with school or training hours and at locations that are readily accessible by young parents.
- Provide training to state and local eligibility staff and caseworkers on the fundamental issues regarding adolescent parenting, the developmental stages of adolescence, and youth culture.

Other Recommendations

- Examine state data to see if young parents are sanctioned at different rates by region of the state, and explore why that might occur.

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Recommendations for Youth-Serving Organizations

Outreach and Case Management

- Provide opportunities for organization staff to learn about the fundamentals of the TANF program and about tools to assist youth in accessing the program.
- Consider designating a TANF specialist within the organization, particularly if it serves large numbers of young parents.
- Provide or arrange for opportunities for young parents to learn about the fundamentals of the TANF program.

Supportive Services

- Provide alternative living arrangements for young parents unable to live at home.
- Assist young parents in developing life skills necessary to effectively manage TANF grants and other sources of income.
- Seek out young parents and encourage them to participate in youth-serving organizations' programming, including case management and public benefit assistance services.

Customer Service

- Incorporate TANF participation and compliance variables into case management systems to assist young people in maintaining compliance with program rules.

Other Recommendations

- Advocate with the public sector to strengthen young parents' access to and use of TANF program.
- Organize a town hall meeting, focus groups, youth survey, or other mechanism for educating state and local elected officials and TANF state agency and local office staff about young parents' views about the administration and operations of the TANF program.

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Recommendations for Young Parents

- Ask an adult whom you trust or find an organization in the community to assist you in learning more about the welfare grant (TANF) program and whether you and your child may be eligible.
- Ask your local welfare office if you are eligible for the TANF grant program. However, if you have concerns that by contacting a government agency you may be jeopardizing your ability to remain with your child, then seek out an adult you trust, a private youth services organization, or a legal aid organization that may be in a position to help you.
- Use the Internet or a phone book to find an organization that works with youth or with low-income people. You may also ask an adult whom you trust to guide you to the right place.
- Contact your local legal aid services office if you feel the local welfare office and/or state welfare agency has not adequately addressed your needs.
- Once enrolled in a welfare grant program, read materials given to you and ask questions to ensure that you are knowledgeable about the rules of the program.
- Participate in focus groups, surveys, and other mechanisms that the state welfare agency, local welfare office, or another organization may arrange for program participants, in order to express your views about the administration and operations of the TANF program.
- Organize a discussion group of young parents to share strategies for working with the welfare grant program.

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Appendix A: Project Design

CLASP and the National Network elected to use written survey instruments as the data collection method for this project. The target subjects for one survey were homeless young parents. The target subjects for a second survey were staff of organizations providing residential services to runaway and homeless youth. Responses from 106 youth and 20 service providers were included in the data analysis.

The National Network recruited youth and provider respondents by sending invitations to all organizations that received funding to provide street outreach, emergency shelter, or transitional living services in fiscal year 2002 under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). The National Network requested these organizations to complete a provider survey and to assist in identifying young parents who would be willing to complete a youth survey. The National Network directed their invitation to RHYA grantees after concluding that this group of organizations would have the greatest ability to identify potential homeless young parent respondents. Organizations other than RHYA grantees also serving homeless young parents were identified through referrals from these RHYA grantees. A total of 430 youth-serving organizations were contacted by mail, e-mail, or fax and invited to participate in the project. Forty-five organizations consented to participate.

The National Network mailed to these 45 organizations a packet that contained survey instructions, a survey instrument to be completed by the organization, multiple copies of the survey instrument to be completed by the young parents, and an envelope for returning completed surveys to the National Network.

The instructions directed the participating organizations to distribute the youth survey to young parents whom the organization determined to meet the federal definition of homeless youth—"an individual who is (1) not more than 21 years of age; and (2) for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative; and (3) who has no other safe alternative living arrangement."[18] Both homeless minor parents (i.e., 17 years of age and younger) and older young parents (18 to 21 years of age) were included within the target population, in part to ensure consistency with the federal definition of "homeless youth," but more importantly because the National Network and CLASP sought to understand the effects of the TANF program on both younger and older homeless youth and their children. However, the survey instrument did include screens at various points that were designed to exclude those respondents for whom the minor parent rules were no longer applicable from answering certain questions about those provisions.

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In both the youth and provider surveys, the majority of questions required respondents to select from multiple choices, while a limited number allowed open-ended responses. Homeless young parents residing at Promise House in Dallas, Texas, as well as youth members of the National Network's National Council on Youth Policy, tested and provided feedback on the survey instrument prior to its distribution. Several adult members of the National Council on Youth Policy reviewed the provider instrument.

Survey distribution and collection occurred in spring 2002. In all, 120 surveys were received from homeless young parents. After removing 14 surveys due to missing data or other respondent errors, 106 youth surveys were included in the analysis. Twenty provider surveys were received.[19] (See Appendix C for a list of organizations participating in the survey.)

Survey data were entered into an Excel database and analyzed using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

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Appendix B: TANF Minor Parent Statutory Provisions

I. The Education/Training Requirement:

Prohibitions; Requirements
P.L. 104-193
Title I, Sec. 408 (a)(4)

"(a) IN GENERAL.

"(4) NO ASSISTANCE FOR TEENAGE PARENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND HIGH SCHOOL OR OTHER EQUIVALENT TRAINING PROGRAM. A State to which a grant is made under section 403 shall not use any part of the grant to provide assistance to an individual who has not attained 18 years of age, is not married, has a minor child at least 12 weeks of age in his or her care, and has not successfully completed a high-school education (or its equivalent), if the individual does not participate in —

"(A) educational activities directed toward the attainment of a high school diploma or its equivalent; or

"(B) an alternative educational or training program that has been approved by the State."

II. The Living Arrangement Requirement:

Living Arrangement Requirement
P.L. 104-193
Title I, Sec. 408 (a)(5)(A)

"(i) REQUIREMENT. Except as provided in sub-paragraph (B), a State to which a grant is made under section 403 shall not use any part of the grant to provide assistance to an individual described in clause (ii) of this sub-paragraph if the individual and the minor child referred to in clause (ii)(II) do not reside in a place of residence maintained by a parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative of the individual as such parent's, guardian's, or adult relative's own home.

"(ii) INDIVIDUAL DESCRIBED. For purposes of clause (i), an individual described in this clause is an individual who —

"(I) has not attained 18 years of age; and

"(II) is not married, and has a minor child in his or her care.

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"(B) EXCEPTION.

"(i) PROVISION OF, OR ASSISTANCE IN LOCATING, ADULT SUPERVISED LIVING ARRANGEMENT. In the case of an individual who is described in clause (ii), the State agency referred to in section 402(a)(4) shall provide, or assist the individual in locating, a second chance home, maternity home, or other appropriate adult supervised supportive living arrangement, taking into consideration the needs and concerns of the individual, unless the State agency determines that the individual's current living arrangement is appropriate, and thereafter shall require that the individual and the minor child referred to in subparagraph (A)(ii)(II) reside in such living arrangement as a condition of the continued receipt of assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government (or in an alternative appropriate arrangement, should circumstances change and the current arrangement cease to be appropriate).

"(ii) INDIVIDUAL DESCRIBED. For purposes of clause (i), an individual is described in this clause if the individual is described in subparagraph (A)(ii), and

"(I) the individual has no parent, legal guardian or other appropriate adult relative described in sub-clause (II) of his or her own who is living or whose whereabouts are known;

"(II) no living parent, legal guardian, or other appropriate adult relative, who would otherwise meet applicable State criteria to act as the individual's legal guardian, of such individual allows the individual to live in the home of such parent, guardian, or relative;

"(III) the State agency determines that

"(aa) the individual or the minor child referred to in subparagraph (A)(ii)(II) is being or has been subjected to serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation in the residence of the individual's own parent or legal guardian; or

"(bb) substantial evidence exists of an act or failure to act that presents an imminent or serious harm if the individual and the minor child lived in the same residence with the individual's own parent or legal guardian; or

"(IV) the State agency otherwise determines that it is in the best interest of the minor child to waive the requirement of subparagraph (A) with respect to the individual or the minor child.

"(iii) SECOND CHANCE HOME. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term 'second chance home' means an entity that provides individuals described in clause (ii) with a supportive and supervised living arrangement in which such individuals are required to learn parenting skills, including child development, family budgeting, health and nutrition, and other skills to promote their long-term economic independence and the well-being of their children."

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Appendix C: Project Participants —Service Providers

The National Network and CLASP are grateful to the following youth-serving organizations for encouraging the homeless young parents participating in their programs and services to complete the youth survey and/or for completing service provider surveys.

Alternative House, Dunn Loring, VA

Brighton Center, Inc., Newport, KY

Community Youth Services, Spokane, WA

Compass House, Buffalo, NY

Covenant House Florida, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Covenant House Florida, Orlando, FL

Families First, College Park, GA

Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, Atlanta, GA

Hilltop Youth Services, Grand Junction, CO

Looking Glass Youth and Family Services, New Roads Program, Eugene, OR

Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Voices for Youth, Marquette, MI

Mountain Home Montana, Missoula, MT

Oak Haven Second Chance Home, Dalton, GA

Promise House, Dallas, TX

Residential Youth Services, Alexandria, VA

Solutions Educational Enrichment Center, Rialto, CA

South Bay Community Services, Chula Vista, CA

Synergy Services, Parkville, MO

The West Avenue Home, Lavonia, GA

Twin Cedars Youth Services, Inc., LaGrange, GA

Vashti Center Second Chance Home, Thomasville, GA

Volunteers of America, Alexandria's House and Apartments for Young Families, Spokane, WA

Volunteers of America, Transitional Housing and Services for Youth and Families, Denver, CO

WestCare CRRYS, Mohave Valley, AZ

Youth In Need, St. Charles, MO

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Endnotes

1 The term "minor child" is described under TANF as "an individual who (A) has not attained 18 years of age; or (B) has not attained 19 years of age and is a full-time student in a secondary school (or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training)" P.L. 104-193, Section 419 (2).

2 States may also use their own funds to assist minor parents, and most state policies seek to allow caseworkers some latitude in assisting minor parents who may not be meeting these two special provisions.

3 Levin-Epstein, J., Grisham, C., & Batchelder, M. (2001, November 30). *Comments to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Regarding Teen Pregnancy Prevention and Teen Parents Provisions in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy; Shapiro, D.L., & Marcy, H.M. (2002). *Knocking on the Door: Barriers to Welfare and Other Assistance for Teen Parents*. Chicago, IL: Center for Impact Research.

4 See United States General Accounting Office. (1989). *Homelessness: Homeless and Runaway Youth Receiving Services at Federally Funded Shelters*. Washington, DC: Author; Greene, J., et al. (1995). *Youth with Runaway, Throwaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

5 See Westat, Inc. (1997). *National Evaluation of Runaway and Homeless Youth*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Caliber Associates. (1997). *Analysis and Interpretation of New Information Concerning Runaway and Homeless Youth*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families; United States General Accounting Office. (1989) *Homelessness: Homeless and Runaway Youth Receiving Services at Federally Funded Shelters*. Washington, DC: Author; Greene, J., et al. (1995). *Youth with Runaway, Throwaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

6 See Westat, Inc. (1997). *National Evaluation of Runaway and Homeless Youth*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

7 Note that results are presented in percentage terms throughout. However, as noted in the Introduction, the survey sample size was small for both the homeless young parents and the youth-serving organizations. When reporting respondents with small denominators we did not calculate percentages. We applied this rule to two groups: homeless young parent respondents who applied for TANF but never received a grant and the youth-serving organization respondents.

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8 Comments from respondents were edited for clarity.

9 Total percentage exceeds 100 because respondents were able to list up to three reasons.

10 While the survey response numbers are low here, research findings from a study of teen parents in Atlanta, Boston, and Chicago by the Center for Impact Research found a similar "turning away at the door" of teen parents by local welfare offices. Shapiro, D.L., & Marcy, H.M. (2002). *Knocking on the Door: Barriers to Welfare and Other Assistance for Teen Parents.* Chicago, IL: Center for Impact Research.

11 As noted previously, percentages are not reported for this group of homeless young parents because of low frequencies.

12 Small inconsistencies in data were found for those answering two questions relating to what information about the living arrangement and education/training rules was provided to them upon application. A differing number of respondents indicated that the question did not apply to them—that they did not apply for TANF while a minor—for the two questions.

13 While the survey instructions requested providers of residential services only to complete the provider survey, participating agencies were also invited to refer other youth-serving agencies to the project, which may or may not have provided residential services. Thus, we were not able to control that some respondents may offer only non-residential services to the runaway and homeless youth they serve.

14 Organizations participating in the survey were from: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New York, Virginia, and Washington. As noted previously, percentages are not reported for the youth-serving organizations because of low frequencies.

15 One respondent did not answer this question.

16 Five respondents did not know if training had been provided.

17 Under current TANF rules, not more than 20 percent of those participants counting toward satisfying a state's participation rate may do so either through participating in vocational training or by being a parent under age 20 engaged in training or school completion. Thus, teen parents and adults engaged in vocational education can be, in effect, "competing" for the available education slots countable towards participation rates. P.L. 104-193, Section 407(c)(2)(D).

18 Sec. 387 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5701 *et seq.*)

19 A number of consenting organizations ultimately did not participate in the project for a variety of reasons, including that they were not serving any eligible youth during the survey period. Forty-five organizations agreed to participate upon initial contact, with 25 organizations returning surveys from homeless young parents and 20 organizations answering the agency survey.

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The Center for Law and Social Policy

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), a national, nonprofit organization founded in 1968, conducts research, policy analysis, technical assistance, and advocacy on issues related to economic security for low-income families with children.

Promoting a Progressive Agenda in Family Policy. CLASP's policy analysts and lawyers are experts on a host of family policy issues, including welfare reform, workforce development, education and training, child care, child welfare, child support, reproductive health/teen parents, and couples and marriage policy. Their work melds legal and policy analysis, qualitative research, and syntheses of quantitative research and best practices — building on years of experience with policy debates, program structures, legal and fiscal rules, and implementation issues.

Securing Access to Civil Legal Assistance. CLASP is a leader in the national equal justice community, representing the interests of programs funded by the Legal Services Corporation, providing training, technical assistance, and written materials on laws and policies affecting legal aid providers, and serving as a key strategist in securing support for civil legal assistance. In addition, through the Project for the Future of Equal Justice, a joint undertaking with the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, CLASP develops and promotes innovative ideas that state justice communities are using to ensure access to justice and to secure brighter futures for low-income individuals, families, and communities.

The National Network for Youth

The National Network for Youth is a membership organization comprised of community-based youth-serving organizations, young people, youth workers, and youth advocates who seek to ensure that young people can be safe and lead healthy and productive lives. The National Network and its members focus their work with and for youth, especially those who, because of abuse, neglect, family conflict or disconnection, community prejudice, disabilities, lack of resources, or other adverse life circumstances, need greater opportunities and supports to become contributing members of their communities.

The National Network accomplishes its mission through policy advocacy, knowledge development and dissemination, training and consultations, public education, and peer networking. The National Network's publications include the quarterly *Network News* and *Policy Reporter* newsletters and the weekly electronic *NNYFYI* and *Public Policy Update*. The National Network convenes an annual conference each February in Washington, DC. The National Network, founded in 1975 as the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, serves as the principal membership association for organizations receiving federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funds.

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